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Senator Crisco, Representative Nicastro and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

My name is Lisa Fine and I am a resident of Manchester. I am an individual living with multiple sclerosis and insulin dependent diabetes, my boyfriend is on dialysis and is waiting for a kidney transplant. We rent the first floor of an old house in Manchester.

I would like to extend my appreciation to Governor Malloy and the Legislature for their long standing support of year-round energy assistance and Operation Fuel.

I am asking the Appropriations Committee to fund Operation Fuel at \$2.2 million for FY 15.

We are struggling, like many, to afford our energy costs. We both receive Social Security Disability Insurance payments and I work part-time to make ends-meet. 2013 was the first year Andy and I qualified for LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) funding. I was told, that if Andy were to get a part time job, our household would exceeded the income allowable. Though we were both very thankful for the 128 gallons of heating oil we received, it was very concerning because there is so much more to our story than merely our income; our medical bills are exorbitant and because of our medical conditions we must follow strict diets and our food is terribly expensive.

We have been borrowing money to pay our oil bills. We keep our home at a constant 58 degrees. We try to dress in layers but it is very difficult, when Andy comes home from dialysis, he is exhausted and very weak. I have severe pain from my multiple sclerosis and diabetes; wearing layers causes increased symptoms of my MS and the pain is excruciating.

Since Andy and I both live with severe chronic illnesses, we need access to not only heating but also cooling. As a person with MS, I need air conditioning as a medical necessity. My physician continues to complete paperwork necessary for shut off protection, but I still must pay the bills. Although I have an air conditioner, I am deathly afraid of running it because of the cost of the electricity. When I get too warm, I cannot walk without falling, my vision becomes blurred, my speech is slurred and my cognition is impaired; all of which makes it very difficult for me to do my job.

If we are able to receive energy assistance, this would maximize our independence. We are an example of why year-round energy assistance is critical for families.

In Connecticut, state and federal funds only cover the costs of winter heating for low income residents. There are no government funds available to assist families with keeping the lights on, maintaining hot water for bathing, refrigeration or cooling. Operation Fuel is Connecticut's only source of year-round energy assistance.

Thank you for all the work you do and again, I am asking you to fund Operation Fuel at \$2.2 million for FY 2015

Sincerely,
Lisa Fine